

Teaching and Learning Grammar for Teens Using Technological Tools

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Abstract

Nowadays learning and teaching Grammar has become easy and interesting with the advent of online tools such as computers, mobiles, and social media such as Blog, Twitter, Facebook, Skype, etc. Online instruction promotes language learning. It is well known that language is guided by Grammar for correct usage so that proper meaning is given to the words and sentences used. Chapman (as cited in *Teaching of English* by P.K Gupta, Anil Gandhi & S.S Bhatnagar, 2012) that “Grammar is a study of language by specialists, made in order to establish the rules and principles which are followed more or less unconsciously or instinctively by the native speakers.” Dr. Sweet (as cited in *Teaching of English* by P.K Gupta, Anil Gandhi & S.S Bhatnagar, 2012) defines Grammar as “the practical analysis of a language, i.e., its anatomy”. Grammar enables learners to use language to describe the world in terms of how, when and where things happen. Keeping this in view, technology is adapted for learning and teaching purposes, to meet the demands of man and enable him to attain the imperishable and flawless treasure of learning. This paper aims at listing and evaluating some of the technological tools used for effective teaching and learning of grammar.

Key words: teaching grammar, technology for grammar teaching, teaching grammar to teens.

Introduction

The use of technology in teaching and learning has changed the classroom environment which is one of the most important aspects that draws more attention from teens in recent years. Smart classrooms are coming into existence based technological advancements. Smart classrooms use Interactive whiteboards which is one of the online devices for effective teaching and learning. Tablet is another device which promotes interactions among teens and with teachers thus changing the classroom environment. Innovative technological tools like computers, mobiles, multimedia and social media have enhanced teen's interest, interactivity and created a student centered environment for better learning. As Sarah Lohnes and Charles Kinzer (2007) remarks that "College Students seek to integrate technology into all aspects of their college experience." Integrating with technology enhances the Teens' interest in learning and helps to clarify doubts relating to their subject.

In India, for educating the population in remote and rural locations EDUSAT was launched on Sep 20, 2004, the first Indian Satellite built exclusively for serving the educational sector. (EDUSAT, ISRO) It is specifically configured for audio-visual medium, employing digital interactive classroom and multimedia multi-centric system. (EDUSAT, ISRO) It promotes the use of e-learning tools to meet the demands of the digital classroom and makes learning and teaching grammar more effective especially for the teens.

Computer as a Technological Tool

Levy (1997) defines CALL as "the search for and study of application of the computer in language teaching and learning". CALL originated in the early 1960s. CALL promotes learner-centered environment and helps him to learn according to his own pace. Schulz (1993) admits the fact that learner can choose the required materials through online instruction and computer as a tool gives individualized feedback and teaches on a one on one basis according to the learner's pace. Besides, computers are noted for 'flexibility of time' (Ahmad, et al., 1985) and 'Location Independence' (Yang, 1998) which enable students actively to participate in learning.

Packages for Online Learning of Grammar

There are a few packages and software for Grammar available through online teaching. They are as follows.

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- **Longman Interactive English Dictionary** is an exciting tool which combines a computer database with sound, video and picture. The user has the access to different kinds of information available on the database about grammar, meanings of words, pronunciation etc. It is provided with real life video situations, photographs, maps etc. This tool helps the learner to understand and learn the structural form of a language and also provides many interactive exercises. (Longman Interactive English Dictionary)
- **The Grammar ROM:** Hilary Rees-Parnall & Ingrid Freebairn emphasizes that Grammar ROM is a program available for students to revise and practice their English grammar in a more exciting way. It contains effective, interactive exercises and tasks on grammar at intermediate level. Students can use The Grammar ROM by themselves as part of their study, or to supplement any intermediate level English language study.(The Grammar ROM-Intermediate Language Study)
- **Welcome to English for Business:** These CD's are available for people who wish to improve their English language skills in the English speaking business environment. These CD programs enable the teens to understand real business English; and they contain many videos which form the centre of the learning activities. The most important feature of these CDs is the fact that it develops grammar and vocabulary. In the business environment the learner learns to use standard English with good grammar.
- **BBC English Expressions:** It is an English Language Course on CD ROM. BBC English Expressions is designed to teach the spoken language required in some of the common situations that one is likely to meet with. The users can learn grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. This also helps him to speak good English with proper grammar.(BBC Learning English)

Software

Automated Writing Evaluation, also referred to as automated essay scoring, was under development since the 1960s. As stated by Chi-Fen Emiy Chen & Wei-Yuan Eugene Cheng (2008) Automated Writing Evaluation was used to evaluate writing quality in terms of discourse structures, grammatical usage, word choice & content development. The above researchers have

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admitted the fact that AWE programs provide a variety of writing assistance features which include **My Editor, Thesaurus, Word Bank, Scoring Rubrics, My Portfolio** and others and of all these features **My Editor** is a proofreading system that automatically detects errors in spelling, grammar and style and hence provides suggestions on how to eradicate and correct such problems.

Mobile Assisted Language Learning as a Technological Tool

MALL is a branch of technology-enhanced learning in English which can be implemented in many forms including face-to-face or on-line modes. Students could learn grammar through mobile phones using short text messages and websites, which are developed to explain sentence structure and English idioms. Mobile devices help learners have a better involvement in learning grammar and to have a better interaction. The use of mobile phone as a learning tool is widely used in educational systems.

Mobile Phone is considered as a miniature of a computer. MALL consists of short lessons of grammar, vocabulary lessons, dictionary, and recorded lectures for better understanding and language learning games. The advantages of using mobile phones as a tool for language learning are promotes social interactivity among students, enhances individual learning by referring to recorded lectures and easy accesibility which enable learners to learn language outside classroom settings.

Multimedia as a Technological Tool

Multimedia is a combined use of several media such as sound and videos in computer applications. It also refers to information in different formats such as text, images, sounds music, videos and animations. In teaching learning process especially in classroom situations different multimedia devices are used, namely, T.V, video, computer, a movie projector and video tape player.

There are different ways to use Multimedia in classrooms for effective learning of grammar for teens. They are as follows:

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1. **Group Video Reports:** In Group video reports 3 to 5 students are assigned to a team and make each team choose a topic based on which they can make a short movie. It fosters team building and grammar learning without any stress.

2. **Video Language Lessons** help speed learning and developing grammar skills through listening. Many types of software are used to make grammar learning effective and interesting. They offer lessons on active and passive voice, direct and indirect speech, parts of speech, uses of tenses, kinds of sentences and patterns, to enhance interest among the teens to learn grammar.

3. **Slide Show Presentation** can be used in any subject. Grammar learning becomes easy and interesting when presented in visual forms by using pictures to teach tense, parts of speech and so on.

4. **Convert Lessons to CDs or DVDs:** Students can listen to Grammar Learning material more than once. With sound forge software one can record lessons, edit and convert the file to CD or DVD format for playback on a personal CD or DVD. This enables learners to analyze how to use the structure of sentences in various situations by listening to the audio and video format.

5. **Podcasting** is a method of communication allowing anyone to create audio files of grammar exercises and post them on the internet for others to download.

7. **Multimedia language lab:** The main purpose of language lab is to focus on sound, text images, videos, animation and interesting context that is accessed from electronic devices such as computer, mp3players, cell phones, and ipods. These tools can develop all the four skills of language as well as grammar skills. Thus Language laboratory has the following facilities to enhance learners' interest in grammar like online tutorials, teaching materials, audio recording, video recording, LCD, teaching software, games, functional grammar and group discussion.

Social Media in Learning and Teaching of English

Social media has taken control of the entire world for the last 10 years. In the field of education - teachers, instructional designers, educational institutions and even organizations have begun to rely heavily on the use of social media for learning in order to promote educational material, share suggestions, information, comments and views on a particular topic.

Blogs

Blogs are otherwise known as weblogs. Blogs are received well in educational streams owing to its multimedia features as well as its ability to support learner autonomy. The strong link between bloggers and readers makes blog a powerful tool for global communication and learning. “The world wide blog enables students to link with and have their work viewed by others outside the classroom.” (Campbell, 2003) Blogs facilitate language teaching and learning in terms of grammar and fluency of speech. Learners are accessible to courses providing them with opportunities to practice grammar exercises. The course includes lectures on public speaking video demonstrations of speech delivery, role playing and such other matters. A blog’s aim is to reach a wider audience.

Facebook

Facebook promotes global communication, interaction and socialization with people. Facebook with blended learning in higher education seems to be a feasible means for teachers to enhance interest among teens in learning grammar. The instructor can create a closed or an open group to share information, ideas, quizzes, materials, questionnaires, pictures relating to grammar. Students can work out grammar exercises given by the instructor and talk about various course-oriented issues. Facebook serves as a platform for teens to post interesting information relating to the subject. Facebook also provides opportunity for students to assess others’ writings and enhance their grammar, structure, content and vocabulary. Thus, online peer assessment enables students to enhance and refine their grammar skills through social interactions in a virtual environment.

Skype

Skype is a communication tool that allows users to make audio and video calls over the internet. It is an excellent tool that helps teachers and learners, for example, today's teens to improve language skills using technology. In addition it also happens to be an effective tool to teach languages and grammar, encourage verbal interaction between users and in learning situations, develop interaction between teachers and students. Besides, it is a good tool for teachers to collaborate with their colleagues in other parts of the world to discuss subject oriented topics. Liz Dwyer (2011) states that Skype is "a free global community created in response to, and in consultation with a growing number of teachers incorporating the tool to help students learning." Thus skype becomes an effective tool for teaching and learning grammar by collaboration.

Twitter

Twitter is a powerful tool to get teens engaged in learning grammar and vocabulary outside school or class which includes activities like finding grammar mistakes in real life situations and tweeting a sentence using the assigned word of the day or snapping a picture of a vocabulary word used in an everyday situation. It also includes games which motivate teens to learn grammar and the different tenses in grammar. It's easily accessible to get advanced learning data and makes learning more fun and appealing to the young learners. For learning purposes, twitter enables teens to tweet notes, views and questions on grammar course contents through the twitter account created by the instructor for each student. Twitter promotes collaborative learning and builds social connections among students with an ice breaker activity. Thus, participating or listening to a tweet chat conversation in relation to grammar is one of the means to learn about a topic in grammar from the perspective of other individuals who are interested in similar ideas.

Conclusion

The present era commences with Technological advancement, because the previous century has already witnessed various developments in Technology. By the end of this era we

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may expect robots playing important roles in teaching. So one must be aware of the technological development and must compete, develop technical skills and be more advanced than the robots. Anne Isabella Thackeray Ritchie (1885) in her novel *Mrs Dymond* coined a Chinese proverb which goes like this: “give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime” (http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/give_a_man_a_fish_and_you_feed_him_for_a_day;_teach_a_man_to_fish_and_you_feed_him_for_a_lifetime). It means that if one gives a man a fish he will eat it for the day, but if he teaches a man how to fish he will eat for the rest of his life. Similarly teachers must teach teens how to teach themselves by using innovative use of teaching and learning tools in English, so that they will learn by themselves. English is a gateway to the modern world, and therefore knowing grammar is indispensable. Thus English language teachers must be innovative, imaginative and resourceful and must adopt new techniques to change the educational pattern for the benefit of the future generations, especially the teens.

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